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# MINUTES

OF THE

PROCEEDINGS OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF

THE FIFTEENTH

# AMERICAN CONVENTION

FOR PROMOTING THE

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY,

AND IMPROVING

THE CONDITION OF THE AFRICAN RACE,

ASSEMBLED AT PHILADELPHIA,

ON THE TENTH DAY OF DECEMBER, 1818, AND CONTINUED BY ADJOURNMENTS UNTIL THE FIFTEENTH OF THE SAME MONTH, INCLUSIVE.

PHILADELPHIA,

PRINTED FOR THE CONVENTION,

BY HALL & ATKINSON, 53, MARKET-STREET.

1818.

# CIRCULAR.

*Philadelphia. November 7th*, 1818.

Sir,

The acting committee, of the American Convention for promoting the Abolition of Slavery and improving the condition of the African race, having communicated to me the resolution of two societies, requiring a call of the Convention, and I having concurred with those societies and with the committee in the propriety of the measure; I do in conformity with the provisions of the constitution of the Convention and in execution of the duties imposed on me as President of that body, call such a meeting at this city, on the 10th day of December, at 11 o'clock, in the Court room of the Circuit Court of the United States, at the south east corner of Sixth and Chesnut streets: I request you to make this known to the Society, over which you preside, and also that you communicate it to the Delegates to the Convention appointed by your society.

The present period is one of deep and increasing interest to those who have the happiness and welfare of the descendants of Africa at heart. The subject of colonization is important, and it has been considered by many, that it has become the duty of the friends of abolition to act in relation to it. The recent proceedings in some of the Southern states, by which persons who have been imported as slaves, in contravention of Laws of the United States, have been

sold into slavery, and the proceeds of this outrage against humanity, morality and justice received into the Treasury of the United States, has justly excited universal indignation. The wide and firm progress of opinion in favour of emancipation and abolition, among numbers of our most distinguished fellow citizens, and the benefits which may result from united efforts in their favour, while these sentiments prevail, demand attention. These are among the subjects which will claim the consideration of the Convention.

It is therefore earnestly and anxiously desired, that the meeting of the Convention be attended by every one of its members, and I solicit you to employ your personal influence to obtain this object.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

RICHARD PETERS, Jun.
President.

# MINUTES

OF THE

PROCEEDINGS OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF

THE FIFTEENTH

# AMERICAN CONVENTION

FOR PROMOTING THE

# ABOLITION OF SLAVERY, &c.

*Philadelphia. December 10th*, 1818.

At a Special meeting of the Fifteenth American Convention for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, convened at Philadelphia, December 10th, 1818, the chair was taken by the President, and in the absence of the Secretary, Isaac M. Ely was appointed to that office.

By reference to the former minutes and credentials now produced, it appears that the following persons are members of this Convention.

*From New York.*

Peter A. Jay,
Isaac M. Ely,
Joshua Underhill,
Hugh M'Cormick,
Theodore Dwight,
Hiram Ketchum,
Nathan Comstock,

*Pennsylvania.*

| | |
|---|---|
| William Rawle, | Joseph Parrish, |
| Abraham L. Pennock, | Richard Peters, Jun. |
| Benjamin Tucker, | Joseph Lea, |
| Joseph M. Paul, | Thomas Shipley, |
| Roberts Vaux, | Edward Needles. |

*Columbia, (Penn.)*

| | |
|---|---|
| William Wright, | Stephen Boyer, |
| William J. Houston, | Samuel Duffield, |
| Charles A. Morris, | Jesse P. Haines, |
| William Kirkpatrick, | James Hopkins, |
| Jonas Preston, | Joseph Mifflin. |

*Delaware.*

| | |
|---|---|
| Edward Worrell, | Jacob Alricks, |
| John Reynolds, | William Gibbons, |
| Evan Lewis, | Joseph Bringhurst, |
| Samuel Hilles. | |

*Kent County, (Del.)*

| | |
|---|---|
| Joseph G. Rowland, | Warner Mifflin, |
| Henry M. Godwin, | |

*Easton, (Md.)*

| | |
|---|---|
| James Neall, | William W. Moore. |

Of whom were present—

Peter A. Jay, Isaac M. Ely, Hugh M'Cormick, Hiram Ketchum, William Rawle, Abraham L. Pennock, Benjamin Tucker, Joseph M. Paul, Roberts Vaux, Joseph Parrish, Richard Peters, jr. Thomas Shipley, Edward Needles, William Wright, Jonas Preston, Joseph Mifflin, Edward Worrell, John Reynolds, Evan Lewis, Samuel Hilles, Joseph Bringhurst.

Communications were then read from the New-York, Pennsylvania, Columbia, Delaware and Easton, Societies, when on motion, Resolved, that said communications be referred to a committee of arrangement, with instructions to report thereon, and also to suggest such other subjects as they may deem proper to claim the attention of the Convention.

Abraham L. Pennock, Peter A. Jay, Hiram Ketchum, Evan Lewis, Jonas Preston, and Richard Peters, Jun. were appointed to compose said committee.

On motion, Resolved, that the acting committee cause the proceedings of the convention of this day with the address of the Societies, to be printed for the use of the Convention.

On motion, Resolved, that when the Convention adjourn, it adjourn to meet again at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning. Adjourned.

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*To the "American Convention for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and improving the condition of the African race," to be assembled at Philadelphia on the 10th of December*, 1818.

The "New York Society for promoting the manumission of slaves, and protecting such of them as have been or may be liberated" have received the communication of the President of that body, notifying a call of the Convention at the time above mentioned Before noticing particularly the objects, which will principally occupy the deliberations of the Convention, the Society, in consideration that their report will probably meet the public eye, would improve

this opportunity to remark upon some of those causes, which oppose themselves to the rapid dissemination of those blessings, which they are anxious to confer.

It is an undeniable fact that the condition of slaves in this country has within a few years become much meliorated; they are treated with more kindness and humanity by their masters than formerly; they enjoy not only by the laws of most of the states, but by a sort of common consent arising from the increased light which has been lately shed on the subject of slavery, more of the rights and privileges of men.—To those, who have been at all attentive to the subject, the cause of this improved condition of the yet wretched sons of Africa is obvious: but to those, who, while they profess joy that the slave is treated more like a human being than heretofore, are in a great measure ignorant of the cause, it ought to be stated, that this improvement, which is the subject of their congratulations, may for the most part be traced to the active and unremitted exertions of the friends of Universal Emancipation.—Against opposition the most imposing, in the face of difficulties that would have deterred any other than resolute hearts, the friends of abolition have pursued their silent yet determined march; and it is an unspeakable consolation, that though they are yet at a sightless distance from the termination of their labours, flowers have already sprung up in their path; they have already heard the pæans of liberty sung by thousands of redeemed captives, and tens of thousands there are, who, though not yet completely emancipated, no more rise to curse the day that gave them birth.

But it is to be regretted that an argument is drawn from the very fact of the improved condition of slaves in this country, calculated in some measure to oppose further advancement in the cause of abolition. It is said that slaves are kindly treated; that

they have sufficient to eat, are well clad, and that they are contented in their situations; that if they were made free and compelled to support themselves, they would not be as well off in the particulars stated, and the friends of abolition are requested to compare the condition of slaves thus provided for, with that of some of those persons of colour who are free, but who are nevertheless among the most idle and dissolute to be found in society. The society are well aware that reasoning of this sort is almost universally resorted to by slave holders themselves, and they regret to find, that, in some instances, it has infected the minds of those, who are well disposed to emancipation; thereby either paralysing their exertions, or rendering them neutral in the controversy. It would be uncharitable to suppose that all, in whose mouths this reasoning is found, are insincere. No: the truth of the remark is very obvious in the present case, that men are more frequently incorrect in their opinions than in their feelings. To those, who are deeply interested in opposing the end which the friends of emancipation propose to their labours, it is hardly to be anticipated that what the society deem correct reasoning on this subject will be addressed with much effect; but to those, who are disposed to investigate the subject impartially, they would say, "come, let us reason together."

It is presumed now too late to deny that the minds of the African race are susceptible of as much improvement, of as noble motives of action, as the whites. If there be a lingering doubt on this subject in the mind of any man, the society would confidently refer him to the African free school of New York. Let him visit that school, and he will find within its walls, as many germs of greatness, as much longing and ardent desire after intellectual aggrandisement, as in any other of equal numbers, and of like organization in that city.

If then the descendants of Africa are in possession of human souls, susceptible of as much improvement as our own; although they may be in a measure contented, they cannot be happy in a state of slavery, unless ignorance be the portion of happiness. If contentment be happiness, then is the brute that perishes more happy than the human being; for, when he has browsed his fill, he is contented: and the human being, upon whom every art, that the imagination of his fellow beings could devise for a succession of ages, has been practised to graduate his mind to the level of brutal instinct, may be contented, when the cravings of his hunger are satisfied, and his body protected from the inclemency of the weather. But shall this be called happiness? Was the human soul, which is an emanation from the Deity, made to be thus degraded? What man of observation; what man, who has taken a retrospect of his fellow-men from the dawn of society to the present day; who is familiar with the long catalogue of crimes, and the vast amount of human misery, which have either been produced by ignorance, or could have been prevented by intelligence; will answer this question in the affirmative? No; it is a truth, that the human mind was given for cultivation: That happiness is alone derivable from its progress in the path of knowledge and virtue. Else why does the establishment of schools, and seminaries of learning, meet such general approbation? Why are these establishments regarded by all wise and good men as the proudest specimens of a nation's grandeur? Why the highly praiseworthy attempts to cultivate the minds of that interesting but long neglected class of the community, the deaf and dumb? Can any, who has beheld the sparkling eye, the animated countenance, of a deaf mute, when the passage was first opened to the introduc-

tion of knowledge to his mind, when he received the first correct ideas of nature, and of nature's God, withhold his assent to the proposition, that knowledge is the proper aliment for the human mind. If this be not so, why the mighty exertions in some countries of Christendom to send the light of intelligence to the darkest corners of the globe? Can it be possible, that the zeal which distinguishes the present age, the knowledge of which begets in the mind of the Christian and the Philanthropist the most exhilarating hopes; can it be possible, that all this zeal is only calculated to mingle the cup of bitterness for man? Certainly it is so, if ignorance be the parent of happiness. But it will doubtless be admitted, even by many slave-holders, that it is laudable to instruct the deaf and dumb; that it is Godlike to civilize and christianize the natives of America, the Indian, and the African, in his own country. But the African, within our borders, is an object of minor concern. When it is seen that in some portions of our country he is degraded almost to the level of the brute; when it may be seen that to cultivate his mind is practicable, he is still neglected; nay more, he is forbidden in some states of the union to receive that pittance of cultivation, which the hand of philanthropy would afford him in his degraded state: the light of knowledge is debarred his mind by solemn municipal provisions. The Society forbear to express the mingled feeling of indignation and regret, which arises in their bosoms at the recollection that such things are in a country so enlightened as our own; nor do they deem it their province to pronounce maledictions; but if there be an Almighty Governor, who delights in justice, and who will judge man according to his actions, they would not like to be the individuals, who aid, abet, or consent to, any regulations, which oppose the growth and expansion of the human mind. We do not hesitate

to declare to the world, that our object is not simply to meliorate the physical condition of the sons of Africa: we will never rest satisfied till every exertion in our power has been made to emancipate their minds. We long for the time, when the language may be addressed to every African, and inculcated in his mind; thou art an accountable being; thou wast born with a right equal to that of any other man to life, liberty, and enjoyment; thou art an heir of immortality. And as a most important step towards the accomplishment of this object, the Society require that the African shall be redeemed from slavery. Truly the advocates of slavery may be consistent, when they withhold knowledge from the mind of the African. If his body must be held in thraldom, the light of moral truth would discover to him the abjectness of his condition, and awake him to a sense of his numerous wrongs. This Society have ever been anxious therefore for the emancipation of the slave, that motives to improvement may be more successfully addressed to his mind; that he, and his children, may come in, and be participators in that philanthropy which characterises the present age, and which seeks to instruct and enlighten. We are by no means of the opinion that the execution of this design towards the African race will be unattended with difficulties. But it is not anticipated that any more difficulties will attend this undertaking than to enlighten and instruct any other people, to debase whom such pains have been taken. As ignorant human beings, they have claims upon our philanthropy; but as beings, who owe their wretchedness to us, justice demands that to us they should also owe their deliverance.

With these preliminary remarks the Society would now observe in relation to the objects for which this meeting is specially called, that they are manifestly

of much importance, and well worthy the serious attention of the American Convention. The recent sale of slaves in Georgia for the benefit of the United States has excited in this community an almost universal feeling of surprise at so shameful an outrage upon humanity and consistency on the part of the United States. The Society hope that there will be no exertions wanting on the part of the Convention, to procure a repeal of the law by which this sale was authorised.

The Society feel pleasure in stating to the Convention that the school under their charge still continues to flourish. The number now instructed in the school is about three hundred; and the applicants for admission for some time past have been more numerous than could be accommodated. From the latter circumstance the Society some time since determined to erect another school-house, as soon as sufficient funds could be collected to authorise the undertaking. An appeal was therefore made to the munificence of our members, and of our fellow citizens at large. This appeal was not made in vain: already have funds been collected to authorise a commencement of the building, and the Society have only been deterred from proceeding in the execution of their plan, by their not being able as yet to procure a situation so eligible as is desired.

Since the last Convention, the standing committee of the Society have manifested their usual diligence: through their exertions, sixty of the African race have been rescued from slavery, and there are now twenty undecided cases under their care. These numbers appear on the records of the committee; but besides these; as great a number owe their freedom to the private exertions of individual members, of which the Society have no record.

The Society would also inform the Convention, that since their last report, they have devised a plan extending their care to certain of the children, who have been instructed in their school, after they have left the school; in putting them out to some useful trade or employment. It has long been a subject of regret to the Society that the children educated at their school, have been suffered, after leaving it, to waste their time in idleness, thereby incurring those vicious habits, which were calculated to render their previous education worse than useless. To remedy this evil, the plan above mentioned was devised. A committee is appointed by the Society, called the Indenturing Committee, whose duty is to provide places for those children, who may have completed their education, either at a trade or some other employment. The committee will take especial care that the persons with whom the children may be placed, shall be those of good characters; and while on the one hand they shall insist that the children demean themselves with propriety, they will, on the other extend their guardian care to them, and provide that they shall not become the subjects of oppression or tyranny. This plan has been communicated to the parents and guardians of those children who are sent to the school, at a public meeting for that purpose; and as far as their opinion on the subject can be gathered, it was very favourably received. In the expression of their opinion, as to the situations to be preferred for those children, who may be indentured, the Society gave a decided preference, and strongly recommended agricultural pursuits. They are well persuaded that pursuits of that nature are far more conducive to the moral improvement of those under their charge, than the pursuits of the city, under the most favourable circumstances. The plan of which the general outline is above given, has not yet been put in complete operation, but it is one from which we anticipate the most salutary results.

Before closing this communication we would direct the attention of the Convention to another subject which we deem of much importance. It is well known that the inhabitants of South America have long been engaged in a bloody contest with the mother country for their independence. Whether they will ultimately succeed or not we hazard no prediction; but the Convention must be well acquainted with the fact, that the propriety of an acknowledgement of their independence on the part of the United States has been urged with much zeal in Congress; and it is probable that the subject will be called up again the present session. As the Slave Trade has been carried on to almost an unprecedented extent by the Colonies on the Spanish Main, this Society have determined to present a Memorial to the Congress of the United States, a copy of which Memorial is herewith sent you.

In all the discussions in Congress on the subject of South American independence, a provision for the welfare of the African race has never to our knowledge formed an item. It is therefore requested that the application on the part of this Society may be seconded by the zeal and influence of the Convention; and we do hope, that the Legislature of our Country, if they ever consent to acknowledge the independence of any or all of the Spanish colonies, will endeavour to obtain from them an abandonment of the Slave Trade.

Signed in behalf of the Society aforesaid,

CADWALLADER D. COLDEN,
President.

*New-York, November 27th*, 1818.

*Copy of the Memorial to Congress, referred to in the preceding Address.*

The Memorial of the "New York Society for promoting the Manumission of Slaves, and protecting such of them as have been or may be liberated," respectfully sheweth,

That we, your Memorialists, have in common with the rest of our fellow citizens, observed with solicitude the course and progress of the revolution in South America; and have felt, as individuals, a strong desire, that genuine principles of civil liberty might prevail there, either under liberal and equitable recognitions from the European governments, with which the provinces of the southern hemisphere were connected, or in a state of entire separation and independence.

On the general character of the revolution; the causes which led to it; the means by which, or the objects for which, it has been maintained, or resisted; or on the policy which it may be expedient for this country to observe in the present crisis; we intentionally forbear expressing an opinion. We are satisfied that our public authorities, possessing full information on these subjects, are inclined to adopt such a course as will, on the one hand, shew the stedfastness of their attachment to the principles of free government; and on the other, that impartiality and moderation, which befits a great nation, desirous of maintaining peace with the world, and prouder of the conquests achieved by the example of her institutions and morals, than of the victories purchased by her sword.

There is one subject, however, on which the paramount laws of humanity give the government of the United States a right to insist, in determining upon the relations which shall hereafter be maintained between this Country and the South American Provinces. *It is the African Slave Trade.*

If the friendship of our Country; powerful in her influence and resources; equitable in her intercourse with foreign nations; elevated in her intellectual and moral character; and diffusive in her benevolence; is not worth the sacrifice of this abominable trade, we hope that the active exercise of this friendship may be withheld, wherever that sacrifice is refused.

We had indulged in the expectation, that amidst the light and benevolence of the nineteenth century, nations, by whom the horrors of this trade had been witnessed, and who were themselves struggling to be free, would have felt the necessity of recommending their condition to the moral sympathy of the world, by coupling with the resolves, which announced their own emancipation, a solemn pledge that this iron-hearted traffic should exist no longer. We regret to state, that thus far, this expectation, so justly formed, has, except in a single instance, been disappointed.

We did hope also, that Spain herself would have perceived the importance of yielding something in this respect to the known public opinion of this Country; especially as it was in

accordance with the avowed wishes of the greater part of Europe. But almost every arrival from the West Indies brings us intelligence that this work of plunder and of cruelty is going on in her hands with renovated ardour, insatiable avarice, and to an extent heretofore unparalleled. The gazettes of this very day, on which we resolve to transmit to your our memorial, announce the importation into Havanna on the 29th October, and the 1st November, of this year, in only six vessels, and all but one of inferior size to a ship, the number of seventeen hundred and thirty-two slaves.

The lands of North America were once crimsoned with this stain. But better times, and better principles have succeeded. She has done, and is doing, much, to atone for the past; and we believe she now has it in her power to repay in some sort the injuries she has formerly inflicted on Africa, by a timely and rigorous interference, which will be honourable to her character in the estimation of the world, and what is of more consequence to her, will be a noble and efficient tribute to the claims of suffering humanity.

We therefore respectfully request that this subject may be duly considered by your honourable body, and that some effective provisions respecting it, may be ordered to be strongly insisted upon, in any arrangements which may hereafter be definitively entered into between this Country and Spain, or the Provinces of South America.

CADWALLADER D. COLDEN, President.

## *To the "American Convention for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, to be assembled in Philadelphia on the 10th of December,* 1818.

The Pennsylvania Society for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, are aware of the difficulties which, at this season, will attend an extraordinary meeting of delegates from the different societies represented in the Convention; yet they believe the occasion such as to have justified the call, and that the present is a period, when interchange of sentiment and union of action, among the advocates of humanity, are particularly desirable.

Among the objects which we conceive as most conspicuously requiring your attention, is the sale which has been made by the public authorities of the United States, or of individual states, of persons illegally imported as slaves into this country, and who notwithstanding the obvious purpose of the law, under which they were sequestered, have been doomed by a construction of that law, to hopeless and interminable slavery! A restoration to those injured fellow beings of their natural and unalienable rights, and an amendment or explanation of the law so as to prevent a repetition of such outrages upon national justice, ought to be obtained. Your exertions to accomplish these purposes, we trust will be prompt, and we hope will be effectual.

Another object and one of considerable magnitude is presented by the efforts now making for the establishment of a colony of free people of colour. The operations of a society established at the seat of government for accomplishing this design, are viewed with anxious interest by the legitimate friends of African emancipation and we believe the period has arrived, when a serious investigation of the probable result of this measure, ought to be no longer avoided. We forbear all comment upon the subject, but we ask your solemn attention to the inquiry, whether such colonization will subserve the interests of humanity, or whether it will have the effect to perpetuate slavery in the United States? In connexion with this investigation, your deliberations will necessarily be directed to the plan lately suggested, of promoting emigration to the island of Hayti.

The Congress of the United States having exclusive legislation over the District of Columbia, such measures as may be necessary to effect the gradual Abolition of Slavery therein, must be obtained by an

act of the general government. The situation of the slave population in that section of our country, has engaged the deep consideration of this Society, and will probably merit a portion of your attention.

The Education of the coloured population of the United States, continues to be an object of much solicitude with the friends of Abolition, whose anxiety is increased, when they behold so large a portion of the community, deprived in a Christian country, of the great privilege of perusing the Scriptures of Truth. The full accomplishment of our desires on this point, we know, is not of easy attainment, but we are encouraged to look forward with the hope of more rapid advancement, from the facilities which would be afforded by the establishment of Schools on the Lancasterian plan.

Impressed with the importance of the foregoing subjects, we have deemed it proper specially to submit them to the view of the Convention. In the performance of the duties which await you, we wish your encouragement, believing, confidently, that under the Divine blessing, your labours of charity for the relief of the oppressed and injured African, will finally be crowned with success; and that He, who first broke down the boundary between Jew and Gentile, will point out to all who bear the Christian name, that a difference of colour is no cause for a suspension of the exercise of Philanthropy and Love.

Signed on behalf and by order of the Pennsylvania Society, &c. &c. &c.

W. RAWLE, President.

Philadelphia, November 19th, 1818.

## *To the "American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery," &c.*

Encouraged by your late Address to the several Abolition Societies in the United States, and by indications of good-will to the cause of justice and humanity in many of the inhabitants of these parts, proposals were offered to persons residing in this place, Lancaster, and York, for forming an Association for the protection of people of colour in their legal claims to liberty; and generally, as occasion might offer, to co-operate with Societies already formed, in promoting the total abolition of slavery in our land: these places being a thorough-fare between some of the states where slavery exists, and the eastern section of the Union, have often been scenes of attempts at kidnapping, and other aggressions on the rights of persons of colour. The result of the application was the institution of the "Columbia (Pennsylvania) Society for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and the relief of free negroes unlawfully held in bondage; and for the melioration of the condition of the African race." The Society was organised on the 21st of the 3d month (March) last, and will meet annually on the first Saturday in March: it consists at present of sixty-four members, most of whom reside in Columbia and York, with a few in Lancaster and its vicinity.

When we reflect upon the enormities which continue to be practised in many parts of our favoured country, on the ill-fated Africans and their descendants; the deeply concerted schemes by which is perpetuated a traffic which we reprobate in pagans and infidels; the strong allurements which the price of slaves in the southern states holds out to avarice; the difficulty of detection; the expense, inconvenience, and vexations attendant on prosecutions; the deficiency of the laws in many of the states; and the

apparent apathy of the general government with regard to this crying national sin,—much appears, to discourage the philanthropist. On the other hand, when we contemplate the character of the age in which we live, marked as it is with a concurrence (unexampled in history) of events of striking import in the physical, political, and religious worlds; the simultaneous exertions that are making in different sections of the globe for the melioration of the condition of man; the favourable changes which have been wrought within a few years, in the views and feelings of civilized men, on questions of vital import to general happiness and improvement; we cannot but recognise the footsteps of Deity in the mighty revolution; and under this view be encouraged to hope, that though thick darkness continues to shroud the minds of many; and the worst passions of the human heart may, in some places, be permitted for a while to belch forth their own shame, and, like the troubled sea, to cast up mire and dirt, the time is nevertheless approaching, when, through the blessings of Providence upon human exertions, justice and mercy shall become respected in the earth; and this much injured and long degraded race be raised to their proper grade in the scale of being.

We observe from the report of your Acting Committee, that an edition of Clarkson's history of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, abridged, has been published, and a number of copies purchased by the Convention for distribution in the states of Kentucky and Tennessee. From some circumstances recorded in that work, it appears, that the want of correct information is often among the causes of the long continuance of abuses: we allude to the astonishing ignorance (in relation to facts connected with that infamous traffic) which appeared in men, who from the eminence of their stations in the political world, might have been supposed to be acquainted with

every important particular capable of affecting either the interests or the character of their government: the labours of the illustrious Clarkson and his worthy coadjutors, brought to light and to the view of the people of England, a chain of enormities till then unsuspected by the mass, and to which credence could with difficulty be obtained even from the better informed. To this deficiency of information was ascribed, in part, the chilling indifference to the great cause he had at heart, which this champion of the rights of human nature had to encounter from men in power; and which required long and painful labour to overcome. May not the apathy which appears so prevalent among our countrymen on this subject, be attributed, in part, to the same cause? We should be unwilling to impute it to a *lower tone* of moral feeling in the members of a free government, than that, which in the subjects of an European monarchy, caused the voice of the nation to resound in the ears of its rulers, till the odium of the Slave Trade was wiped from the annals of their country.

Whence then *does* it arise, that in the bosom of this *Republic*, among a people calling themselves *Christians*,—in an age that arrogates the epithet "enlightened," not only is Slavery still tolerated, but in some of the states, a slave-holder may with impunity, for the most trivial offence which pride may magnify into crime, bind, scourge and even put to death, the helpless victim of his rage; and that, too, with a refinement of cruelty which outrages the moral sense of the community, and rivals in horrors, the inquisition of Spain! And yet, for all this, no general expression of national feeling reaches the ears of our rulers; the tables of Congress groan not with petitions from every quarter of the Union, for a final

and total abstersion from this *foulest* stain!*—Have we laws for the protection of the horse from abusive treatment, and do we surrender our own species to receive, for imaginary crimes, a punishment to be meted out by the distorting scale of pride and revenge! Surely if these things *must* be,—if there exists not, as we have been told, in our republican institutions, "a redeeming spirit," in vain shall we boast of the excellence of those institutions; and deem ourselves a wise, a virtuous, and happy people; we must be content, in a national capacity, to rank among those benighted millions on whom the compassionate religion of the gospel has not yet dawned.

We deem it matter for regret, that while the talents of our writers and public speakers are put in requisition to rouse the attention of the nation, to subjects of comparatively small importance, and but slightly connected with the virtue or prosperity of the country; *this* subject, so important to the happiness of millions in its actual state,—so portentous in its aspect to millions yet unborn,—and involving questions of the first magnitude to an enlightened people, should engage so small a share of public feeling, or public exertion. But we nevertheless hope the day is dawning, wherein, by the talents and energies which shall be combined in this glorious work, "those who have the power, and whose duty it is to cleanse us from *this* disgrace," will be induced "to do so."

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* We pretend not to say whether in any of the states such outrages are permitted by law: But if the uncontradicted statements in our newspapers are correct, the conclusion is inevitable, that in some of the states either there exist no laws to prevent the most brutal treatment of slaves; or, there is not in the community, virtue enough to carry those laws into effect. In either case the state of society is deplorable; and the sin lies at the doors of those who have the making, and of those with whom rests the execution of the laws.

To effect this desirable union of talents and energy, more general and correct information of the real state of things among us appears to be a pre-requisite. The history of the abolition of the slave trade, may have a tendency to shew how far avarice may steel the heart of man against justice and compassion; but, as it relates to a trade that is now considered as legally abolished, it is doubtful whether it would have the effect of bringing the views of our countrymen to the required point—the state of things among ourselves. We would therefore respectfully suggest to the Convention the taking of measures for collecting and circulating such facts as may tend to elucidate this dark subject; and awaken throughout the Union, a more lively interest on behalf of the wretched African, and of our national character.

This Society being yet in its infancy, we can say but little on the subject of education. Our acting committee, at our last meeting, were specially charged with this part of our concern; and requested to collect the names of such coloured children as were entitled to the provisions made by law for the education of the poor; and to endeavour to put them in a way to receive that benefit.

We annex a list of our officers for the present year:

President, Wm. Wright; Vice-President, Wm. Vicary; Treasurer, Wm. F. Houston; Secretaries, Jos. Mifflin and John Barber; Counsellors, Wm. Jenkins, Esq. Lancaster, and Samuel Bacon, Esq. York, Pa.

Signed by order and on behalf of the Columbia, Pa. Abolition Society for promoting the abolition of slavery, &c.

WM. WRIGHT, President.

JOSEPH MIFFLIN, Secretary.

*Columbia*, 12 *mo. 5th*, 1818.

## *To the American Convention for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, &c.*

The Abolition Society of Delaware, in looking forward to the approaching call of the Convention, have anticipated some useful and important results from their deliberations. It is believed to be a period, peculiarly interesting to the cause of the oppressed descendants of the African race. The minds of the people in different sections of our country, have been arrested by serious considerations on the subject of their degraded situation. Societies have risen up within these few years, in the midst of slave-holding states, who have plead their cause; and who have not only laboured for the melioration of their unhappy situation, but have advocated the general and total abolition of slavery. The voice of humanity has sounded in the halls of legislative assemblies, and in courts of justice, where once the cause of emancipation would not have been heard.

While we view the labours of philanthropists, thus extending the influence of correct opinions, and gradually paving the way for the accomplishment of so desirable an object as the abolition of slavery, we feel ourselves animated to continued and persevering exertions in this righteous cause, though many discouraging circumstances still present to cloud the brightening prospect which the labours of benevolent societies and individuals have opened to our view. Though we confidently believe that the march of philanthropy is steady and constant, and that the cause of the oppressed Africans is gradually gaining ground in the minds of our countrymen, yet we are well assured that to insure the final triumph of correct opinions, no effort in the power of the friends of abolition should be withheld.

In order to evince the necessity of continued exertions, we need only advert to the violation of the *spirit* of the law of Congress prohibiting the importation of slaves into the United States; which violation has been sanctioned by those in power. The propriety of calling the attention of Congress to this subject, in order that a suitable remedy may be applied, is respectfully recommended to the Convention.

It is also a desirable object with the members of the Delaware Society, that the Convention should petition Congress for the abolition of slavery within the District of Columbia. This, it is believed, falls properly within the limits of the constitutional powers of the general government. Let the metropolis of a free and enlightened people, and the district over which the representatives of that people hold exclusive jurisdiction, no longer acknowledge, or legalize slavery.

The practice of carrying off free persons of colour from the northern and middle states, and consigning them to perpetual slavery in the south, still calls loudly for legislative interference. Congress alone have the power of applying a remedy, and it is thought no duty is more imperiously called for at their hands, than that of exercising the authority with which the constitution has clothed them for the suppression of this wicked traffic;—a traffic equally cruel and atrocious with the slave trade on the Coast of Africa.

The present condition of the inhabitants of St. Domingo, will probably claim the attention of the Convention. A correct knowledge of the political economy,—agriculture, and the state of education in that island would be highly interesting to the friends of emancipation: and we believe there is no congregated body who can obtain that information with so

much facility as the Convention of the Abolition Societies.

Signed by order of the Abolition Society of Delaware, Wilmington, 10 mo. 16, 1818.

EDWARD WORRELL, President.

Attest—Isaac Jackson, Secretary.

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## *To the "American Convention for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, &c."*

We avail ourselves of the opportunity afforded us to acknowledge the receipt of your address of last year, which being read in our Society was attended to with much interest and satisfaction. Animated by the example set by those Societies and philanthropic individuals that have preceded us in the laudable work of meliorating the condition of the African race, we cannot but endeavour to follow in the path which has been trodden by some of the wisest and best men our country has produced, who regardless of popularity, have with a steady and undeviating firmness, pursued to condign punishment the midnight violator of the law, and of the peace, happiness and civil rights of that oppressed people.

We have since our last year's communication, been variously and actively engaged in promoting the grand object for which our association was instituted: viz. the protection of that portion of the deseendants of Africa unlawfully held in bondage, or entitled to freedom at a given term, or upon a contingency. Seeing the lameness of the law in our State respecting blacks, we again petitioned our Legislature for a revision of the laws on that subject, or the enactment of others more congenial to the principles of justice

and the protection of this unfortunate class of people: and we are happy to state that we have so far succeeded as to procure that foul stain to be wiped from our statute book, which lodged a fellow man in prison, who could not at the instant produce his Certificate of freedom, and which if at length exhibited, could not regain his liberty without paying his own prison fees. Other laws have been passed, enabling us with more ease to test the validity of purchases made of these unfortunate people, and giving us the power to enter houses and vessels bearing strong marks of suspicion.

We have also petitioned Congress as the guardian of the rights and privileges of the people for which it legislates, to alter or amend the law relating to the clearance or entry of ships and other vessels navigating our waters coastwise, which would authorise the officers of custom to detain any ship or other vessel whose manifest did not satisfactorily point out the condition of the unfortunate victims that might be found on board them; and although our memorial was received, and the matter contained therein committed, we are sorry to say the relief asked for has not yet been afforded, but we have reason to hope we shall meet with better success the present session.

Our acting committee always vigilant in the discharge of its duties, has been constantly engaged in seeking out objects requiring its assistance and protection. Located, as we are, in this State, the mass of whose citizens have not yet seen that justice demands of them the sacrifice that our brethren of the northern section of our country have made, it consequently requires no common effort of the human mind to sustain a sufficient portion of buoyancy, to bear us up against the powerful current of opposition that presents itself, and threatens at every surge the destruction of all our hopes. Although we are beset

by many discouragements, yet we are strengthened by the knowledge of the fact that our cause is the cause of justice, and that it is not those who run well for a season only, that are enabled to gain the goal of their wishes: we therefore trust that our little band, by persevering in the duties allotted it, will at length overcome many of the difficulties which now present themselves, and be enabled to do much towards meliorating the condition of the hapless sons of Africa. In devoting our time, talents and means to soften the situation of that afflicted people, we have not been unmindful of the benefits that would be derived from tutoring their unlettered minds, we cannot yet however, look towards it in any other than a prospective light: time, with its all smoothing quality, must wear away the prejudices of the people, before there can be a sufficient accumulation of funds, to advance that subject in this part of the vineyard.

In concluding this communication we cannot but hope that our feeble efforts will pave the way to a more general good, as the numbers which have been released from the tyrannic grasp of hardened kidnappers, have caused them to become more circumspect in our vicinity. We hail, as an auspicious omen, the establishment of another Society similar to ours in one of our neighbouring villages, (Centerville) whose objects flowing as ours from philanthropic principles alone, will we trust have a considerable influence, in producing a more general sympathetic feeling for the miseries of the ill-fated descendants of Africa.

ROBERT MOORE, President.

Attest—LAMBERT CLAYLAND, Secretary.

11th mo. 30th, 1818.

*December* 11*th*, 1818.

Ten o'clock A. M. Convention met pursuant to adjournment, and proceeded to business.

Joshua Underhill and Hugh M'Cormick, two of the delegates from New York, appeared and took their seats.

The Committee of Arrangement made the following Report:

## *To the American Convention for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, &c.*

The Committee of Arrangement beg leave to report, that having attentively considered the interesting and important subjects contained in the communications from the several societies, they respectfully propose the annexed Resolutions, as embracing those objects which particularly require the attention of the Convention at this period.

1. Resolved, That the sale of persons of colour, by the regulations adopted by the several states, under the authority of the 5th section of the act of Congress, passed March 2d, 1807, entitled "An act to prohibit the importation of slaves," be referred to a committee, to report by memorial to Congress or otherwise.

2. Resolved, That the subject of the education of the people of colour in the United States, be referred to a committee, to consider what measures it may be proper for this Convention to adopt in relation thereto.

3. Resolved, That the subject of endeavouring to obtain from Spain and the South American States, a relinquishment of the slave trade, and the memorial to Congress on that subject, by the New York Society, be referred to a committee.

4. Resolved, That the subject of the colonization of the free blacks in Africa or elsewhere, be considered by the Convention, in committee of the whole.

5. Resolved, That the situation of the slave population within the District of Columbia, be referred to a committee, to report thereon by memorial to Congress or otherwise.

6. Resolved, That the Acting Committee be instructed to collect such facts, as it may be in their power to obtain, in rela-

tion to the condition of people of colour in the slave-holding states; also in relation to the practice of kidnapping, and report thereon at the next session of the Convention.

Submitted by order of the Committee.

ABM. L. PENNOCK, Chairman.

Philad. 12 mo. [Dec.] 11th, 1818.

On motion, Resolved that the above Report, with the several resolutions therein proposed be adopted: whereupon the first, second, third and fifth resolutions were referred to the following special committees:

*The first resolution*, to Isaac M. Ely, Abraham L. Pennock and Joseph Bringhurst.

*The second*, to Roberts Vaux, Hiram Ketchum and William Wright.

*The third*, to Peter A. Jay, Abraham L. Pennock and Evan Lewis.

*The fifth*, to Jonas Preston, Evan Lewis and Joshua Underhill.

The Acting Committee made the following Report:

## *To the American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, &c.*

The Acting Committee, desirous of furnishing the Convention with the knowledge of such of their transactions as it will be proper to lay before it at this session, respectfully Report, That since the last meeting of the Convention, they have received communications from three Societies lately established for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, who desire to send Delegates to the next Convention, viz. The Manumission Society of Guilford County, North Carolina, The Humane Society of Ohio, and The Columbia, Pennsylvania Society for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, &c.—a delegation from each was accordingly invited. Shortly after the meeting of Congress last

year, a correspondence was opened with John Sergeant, Esq. one of the representatives in Congress from Pennsylvania, and formerly a member of the Convention, relative to the utility of memorializing Congress at that time, but from the information received from him, the Committee judged it most expedient to postpone it till the present session, in order to be prepared with some documents to shew the great extent of the inland traffic in slaves, and the numerous instances of kidnapping free people of colour, on which to found a petition for more vigorous laws on the subject: they addressed a circular to a number of humane individuals in the states adjoining Pennsylvania, which they expect will furnish them with many well authenticated cases of violence and cruelty to this oppressed people.

The Manumission Society of Tennessee having made arrangements to publish a periodical paper, to be entitled the Manumission Intelligencer, the Acting Committee believing it would subserve the cause we are engaged in, to encourage such a work, have subscribed to it on the part of the Convention. Agreeably to the instructions of the last Convention, they forwarded circulars to a number of individuals in the several states, to stimulate them to form new Associations to protect the rights of persons of colour and promote the final abolition of slavery, and they have the satisfaction to believe that one or more Societies have been established in consequence. William Dillwyn of London having received a copy of the proceedings of the last Convention, generously made us a donation of one hundred dollars as a testimony of his approbation; this increase of our funds enabled the Committee to assist two of the Societies who had made application for aid, they accordingly transmitted fifty dollars to each, viz. The Philanthropic Society of Easton, Md. and the Society for the Relief of People of Colour in Kent County, Delaware; they have also, in obedience to the resolution of the Convention, prepared an amended form of the Constitution, which accompanies this Report.

Respectfully submitted by order of the Committee.

BENJAMIN TUCKER, Chairman.

Thomas Shipley, Secretary.

Philadelphia, 12mo. 10, 1818.

The Acting Committee having been instructed at the last session of the Convention to suggest such alterations and amendments to the Constitution as they may deem proper; the amended form thereof,

accompanying their report, was taken up, considered by sections, and with further alterations, concurred with;—whereupon it was on motion, *Unanimously Resolved*, that the amended form of the Constitution, as subjoined, be adopted; to take effect on the first Tuesday of October 1819, at which time the next stated meeting of the Convention shall be held.

# CONSTITUTION

OF

## THE AMERICAN CONVENTION

*For promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and improving the condition of the African race.*

A consideration of the injustice, immorality and impolicy of SLAVERY, having induced, in various parts of the United States, the establishment of SOCIETIES for promoting its abolition, protecting that portion of the coloured population who are legally free, and improving the condition of the African race; and THEY, in order more completely to carry into effect their humane intentions, having formed an Association, composed of Delegates from each Society, have adopted for its government, the following

## *CONSTITUTION.*

### ARTICLE I.

1. This Convention shall embrace every suitable occasion for advancing the common purposes of the Societies represented; it shall specially superintend the interests of the coloured population of the United States, and shall be known by the name and title of "THE AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR PROMOTING THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY, AND IMPROVING THE CONDITION OF THE AFRICAN RACE."

2. The Convention shall be composed of such representatives, as the respective Societies associated to protect the rights of free persons of colour, or to promote the abolition of slavery, within the United States may think proper to appoint, provided that the number from any one Society shall not exceed ten.

3. All questions which shall come before the Convention, shall be decided by a majority of votes, except such as relate to the Constitution, and are hereafter provided for.

## ARTICLE II.

1. The Convention shall meet biennially in the city of Philadelphia, on the first Tuesday in October. It may adjourn from time to time, to such place as it may deem proper, and may be specially convened as is hereinafter provided.

2. A representation from three Societies shall be a quorum to transact business, but adjournments may be made by a smaller number.

## ARTICLE III.

1. The Officers of the Convention shall consist of a PRESIDENT, VICE-PRESIDENT, two SECRETARIES, and a TREASURER, who shall be elected by ballot at the stated meetings of the Convention, and at any other meetings when vacancies shall occur.

2. The President shall preside at all meetings of the Convention and preserve order therein. He shall have no vote in the decision of questions, except when there shall be an equal division.

3. The Vice-President shall perform the duties of President, in the absence of that officer.

4. The Secretaries shall keep accurate minutes of the proceedings of the Convention: One of them shall reside in Philadelphia, and have charge of the records.

5. The Treasurer shall keep the monies and other personal property of the Convention. Before he enters upon the duties of his office, he shall give to the President, for the use of the Convention, a bond in the sum of one thousand dollars, or in such other sum as the Convention may direct, for the faithful discharge of his trust. He shall furnish to the Convention at its stated meetings, and at other times when required, a statement of his accounts, and shall pay all orders drawn upon him by the Convention, or its Acting Committee.

## ARTICLE IV.

1. An Acting Committee shall be appointed at the stated meetings of the Convention, and at other times, when a new arrangement may be expedient, to superintend and transact such business as may require attention during the recess of the Convention. They shall have power to supply any vacancies which may occur in their body.

2. The Acting Committee shall appoint a Chairman and Secretary, keep minutes of their transactions, and be subject to such rules for their government as the Convention may prescribe.

3. In case of the death or absence of any officer of the Convention, the Acting Committee, if necessary, shall make a temporary appointment to supply the vacancy during the recess of the Convention.

## ARTICLE V.

1. All funds of the Convention, arising from contributions or otherwise, shall be at its sole disposal; special attention being at all times had to the exigencies of individual Societies.

2. All orders drawn upon the Treasurer by the Convention, shall be signed by the President, and one of the Secretaries, and those drawn by the Acting Committee, in performance of duties required by the Convention, shall be signed by their Chairman and Secretary.

## ARTICLE VI.

1. Special meetings of the Convention may be called in cases of emergency, by the President, at the request of any two Societies of different States: due notice of which meetings shall be communicated by him to the several Societies, and to the Acting Committee of the Convention.

2. Additions and amendments to this Constitution shall be proposed at least *six months* previous to their adoption, and shall only be enacted with the concurrence of two thirds of the members convened.

Adjourned to meet at 7 o'clock, P. M.

Seven o'clock P. M. Convention met pursuant to adjournment, and proceeded to business.

Joseph Lea, a delegate from Pennsylvania, now appeared and took his seat.

The Committee on Resolution No. 2, made the following Report, which on motion was adopted.

## *To the "American Convention for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, &c."*

The committee to whom was referred the consideration of the subject of "*the education of the people of colour in the United States, and what measures it may be proper for this Convention to adopt in relation thereto,*"

*Respectfully Report,*

That they are deeply impressed with the soundness of the sentiments and opinions, which have given origin to a new and interesting field of labour to the philanthropists of the world, whose energies have been enlisted, for the promotion of universal education. That they regard the improvements which have been made in the facility and economy, by which the rudiments of useful learning may be communicated to youth, especially upon the Lancasterian system, as a circumstance which cannot be duly estimated, with feelings inferior to those, which enable the mind to recognise and acknowledge, in such benefits, the interposition, and goodness of an Almighty Providence. On the numerous blessings which flow from education, whether we consider its advantages in relation with national prosperity and security, or individual happiness, it is now unnecessary to dwell; it appears to have become a maxim, with which the wise and good of all countries will accord, that it confers the most substantial charity, and promises the most ample rewards.

Whilst therefore it has become the cardinal duty of benevolent individuals and governments, and is even found to be the noble ambition of Princes, to disseminate education among the white portion of mankind, it surely becomes important that the long afflicted descendants of Africa, whom avarice and national policy, have removed from their native soil, and subjected to slavery in other countries, should partake of the advantages which must flow from education, as fitting them gradually with other meliorating measures, for the enjoyment of that freedom,

and happiness, which the common parent of mankind has designed to be the inheritance of his accountable beings.

With these opinions, and views, your Committee earnestly recommend to the Convention, the propriety of encouraging the respective Societies, to make the education of the people of colour a prominent object of their concern, and to promote by every means in their power, the removal of those objections, which unhappily becloud the minds of slave-holders, in regard to this interesting obligation.

Your committee beg leave in conclusion, to submit the following resolution.

Resolved, that a Committee be appointed to prepare an address to the Abolition Societies of the United States, among other subjects, soliciting their especial care and attention to the education of people of colour.

ROBERTS VAUX.
HIRAM KETCHUM.
WM. WRIGHT.

Philadelphia, 12th month, (Dec.) 11, 1818.

Hiram Ketchum, Isaac M. Ely, William Wright, Samuel Hilles and Evan Lewis, were appointed a Committee to prepare the address to the Abolition Societies in the United States.

The Committee on Resolution No. 3, made the following report, which with the memorial accompanying it, were ordered to lie on the table.

## *To the "American Convention for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, &c."*

The Committee to whom was referred the consideration of measures proper to be pursued by this Convention relative to the slave-trade carried on by the South American States and by Spain, and also the memorial to Congress from the New-York Manumission Society, report.

That in their opinion it will be proper for this Convention to make application to Congress, praying that the influence of the United States may be exerted with the court of Spain to induce that country to prohibit the slave-trade, and that a stipulation for such prohibition, may be insisted on, in any treaty to be made with the South American States, or in case of any acknowledgment of their independence.

The Committee submit to the Convention whether such an application to Congress should be contained in a separate memorial, or whether it might not be more expedient to combine in one memorial, all the applications to be made by this Convention.

The Committee submit the draft of a memorial, in case the first alternative shall be preferred.

In behalf of the Committee,

PETER AUGUSTUS JAY, Chairman.

The Convention then resolved itself into a *committee of the whole* on the subject of colonization, in conformity with the 5th Resolution of the Committee of Arrangement. Dr. Jonas Preston, in the chair. After some time spent in the consideration thereof, the Committee rose, and reported that it was their opinion that a select committee should be appointed, to ascertain and report facts in relation to the subject.

Whereupon, it was resolved, that the proposed plan of colonizing the free people of colour in Africa, be referred to a committee of five members to ascertain and report facts connected with that object, and to suggest such course of proceeding in the case, as in their opinion, it may be proper for this Convention to adopt.

Richard Peters, Junr. Peter A. Jay, Nathan Comstock, Joseph Bringhurst, and Abraham L. Pennock, were appointed to compose the committee.

Adjourned until 10 o'clock to-morrow morning.

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December, 12th, 1818.

Ten o'clock A. M. Convention met and proceeded to business.

The Committee on Resolution No. 5, reported the draft of a memorial to Congress, on the subject of the slave population in the district of Columbia, which was ordered to lie upon the table.

At the request of the Convention, Prince Saunders and James Forten appeared before them. An interesting memoir on the present state of Hayti, was read by the former, and a general account of the condition of the people of colour in Philadelphia, given by the latter; whereupon the thanks of the Convention were presented to them by the President.

Adjourned until half past three, P. M.

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Half past three, P. M.

Convention met, pursuant to adjournment.

The memorial to Congress, reported by the Committee on Resolution No. 3, was called up for consideration; and it being resolved that the subject thereof, should be submitted to Congress separate from other applications to that body, the memorial was adopted as follows;—

*To the Honourable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled.*

The Memorial of the American Convention for promoting the abolition of slavery and improving the condition of the African race,

*Respectfully Sheweth;*

That when these United States declared themselves independent, they proclaimed by the same act, that all men were created free, and that the Creator

had endowed them with an unalienable right to liberty—The truth thus solemnly proclaimed, is sanctioned by revelation and demonstrated by reason. These States founded upon it their right to be a Nation, and they became such, by acting in pursuance of it. It is self-evident that nothing can be more inconsistent with the principle thus solemnly announced and acted on, than the permission of a commerce in the bodies of men, by which countless multitudes of our fellow creatures and their innocent posterity are doomed to perpetual bondage. As America had the glory of being the first to proclaim solemnly to the world the equal rights of mankind, so she had the additional honour of striking the first blow at that abominable traffic, by which those rights are most heinously violated. No sooner had the national government power to legislate on the subject than Congress prohibited the slave trade.

It is with great pain your memorialists have perceived that the new Republics of South America, professing to act on the same principles which have led this country to Independence, Happiness and Glory, have nevertheless, with perhaps a single exception, refused to follow her example in sacrificing their pecuniary interest to the cause of liberty and mankind. At the very moment when they are resisting unto blood, the oppressions practised on themselves, they are condemning to a slavery infinitely more severe than that of which they complain, an incalculable number of men, who by their own acknowledgment are entitled to the same rights as they. Your memorialists had hoped that when the example given by Congress, had been followed by nearly all the civilized world, even by the most arbitrary monarchies, these new Republics just springing into life and acknowledging *Liberty* as their guardian and their guide, would not have been found among the most active agents of slavery.

Though your memorialists sympathize with every effort in the cause of freedom, they do not presume to offer an opinion on the course which this country should pursue in relation to the South American states, they confide in the wisdom of the general government to act on this subject, as duty and prudence shall direct; but if at any time those States shall be acknowledged, or if any treaties shall be made with them, your memorialists respectfully hope and pray, that this government will insist on the prohibition by them, of the most odious traffic which ever disgraced and afflicted mankind.

Your memorialists hope they will not be thought presumptuous, in suggesting that the government will acquire honour to itself and perform a real service to humanity, by uniting its efforts with those of the other enlightened nations of Christendom, to induce the Spanish court also, to terminate this odious commerce. Should the United States succeed in these objects, it will be a perpetual source of rational exultation, that they not only commenced the attack but completed the victory over a hideous and formidable monster, which has desolated Africa, and polluted this, with the tears and the blood of another continent.

*Signed on behalf and by order of the Convention, assembled at Philadelphia, December* ——, 1818.

On motion, Resolved that a Committee be appointed to prepare an address to the free people of colour in the United States, enjoining upon them the strict observance of moral, religious, and social duties. Thomas Shipley, Evan Lewis, Joseph M. Paul, and Hugh M'Cormick were appointed a Committee for that purpose.

The minutes of the KENTUCKY ABOLITION SOCIETY held in Frankfort County the 15th and 16th

of October 1817, with the circular address of that Association were introduced by a member and read. Whereupon it was RESOLVED, that we view with pleasure, the continued exertions of that Society in the cause of humanity, and that the Acting Committee be directed to forward to it, the usual number of copies of the minutes of the proceedings of this Convention.

A communication was introduced and read from Henry Crew, Secretary of the *Union Humane Society*, in Mount Pleasant, Ohio, accompanied with ten copies of an oration, pronounced before it, May 14, 1818. The objects of the Society, were stated, in the communication, to be parrallel with those of the Convention, and they requested to be informed whether a representation from them to the Convention, would be desirable. The President reported that on receipt of the above, he had invited that Society to appoint Delegates to the Convention.

On motion, William Wright and Dr. Jonas Preston, Delegates from Columbia, were added to the Acting Committee.

Adjourned till 10 o'clock on Monday morning.

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December, 14th, 1818.

Ten o'clock A. M. Convention met, and proceeded to business.

On motion, Resolved that a special Committee be appointed to prepare a memorial to Congress, for the signatures of the citizens of the United States, requesting the adoption of such provisions, as will exclude slavery from the limits of such territorial governments as may hereafter be established within our country, and prevent any such future territo-

ry from being erected into a state, unless slavery shall be prohibited by the constitution thereof.

Theodore Dwight, Hugh M'Cormick and Nathan Comstock, were appointed to compose said Committee.

On motion, Resolved that the expences which shall be incurred by the above Committee, in printing and distributing such number of copies of the memorial, as they may deem requisite, shall be paid from the funds of the Convention,

The Committee to whom the Resolution No. 1 was referred, reported the draft of a memorial to Congress, on the subject of the sale of persons of colour, &c. which was ordered to lie upon the table.

Adjourned to half past six, this evening.

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Half past six, P. M.

Convention met, agreeably to adjournment.

The Committee appointed to prepare an address to the free people of colour in the United States, reported the following draft, which being read and considered, was adopted.

## *To the free people of colour and descendants of the African race, in the United States.*

The American Convention composed of Delegates from several Abolition and Manumission Societies in the United States, being assembled in Philadelphia, for the purpose of promoting the great cause of emancipation, and for the melioration of the condition and the general improvement of the descendants of the African race; have deemed it their duty to address you, on some subjects intimately connected with your future welfare and prosperity. They

perform this duty the more willingly, from a conviction that such counsel and advice as they may communicate, will be received and listened to with attention, from the circumstance of its proceeding from those who have long had your best interests at heart.

Vain will be the desire on the part of the friends of abolition, to behold their labours crowned with success, unless those coloured people who have obtained their freedom, should evince by their morality and orderly deportment, that they are deserving the rank and station which they have obtained in society: unavailing will be the most strenuous exertions of humane philanthropists in your behalf, if you should not be found to second their endeavours, by a course of conduct corresponding with the expectations and the wishes of your friends.

We intreat you therefore by the ties which bind us together as children of one common Creator;—by the obligation imposed upon us, as joint objects of redeeming love; as heirs alike with us, of the rewards and benedictions which rest upon all who perform the religious and social obligations of life with fidelity;—by the sacred duties which you owe to yourselves, and to the Author of your existence; seriously to consider the great responsibility which rests upon you as FREEMEN, so to order and regulate your conduct and deportment in the world and amongst men, that your example may exhibit a standing refutation of the charge, that you are unworthy of freedom. And let us impress it upon YOU, whose opportunities of information have been greater than the generality of your colour, to use the influence which your superior knowledge may have given you among your brethren, to dissuade *them* from the commission and practice of those vices which degrade and

disgrace them in the eyes of mankind; particularly let it be your constant endeavour to repress among them dram drinking, frequenting of tippling shops and places of diversion, idleness and dissipation of every description, and to promote and encourage as much as possible, habits of sobriety, industry and economy, punctual attendance on places of religious worship, particularly on the day appointed for rest from labour, and for the exercises of devotion; avoiding noisy and disorderly conduct on those days, as well as at other times; and to demean themselves peaceably and respectfully, towards all those with whom they have intercourse. This will do more, towards advancing your cause in the earth, than the labours of your friends can effect in your behalf.

The great work of emancipation is not to be accomplished in a day;—it must be the result of time, of long and continued exertions: it is for you to show by an orderly and worthy deportment that you are deserving of the rank which you have attained. Endeavour as much as possible to use economy in your expences, so that you may be enabled to save from your earnings, something for the education of your children, and for your support in time of sickness, and in old age: and let all those who by attending to this admonition, have acquired the means, send their children to school as soon as they are old enough, where their morals will be an object of attention, as well as their improvement in school learning; and when they arrive at a suitable age, let it be your especial care to have them instructed in some mechanical art suited to their capacities, or in agricultural pursuits; by which they may afterwards be enabled to support themselves and a family. Encourage also, those among you who are qualified as teachers of schools, and when you are of ability to

pay, never send your children to free-schools; this may be considered as robbing the poor, of the opportunities which were intended for them alone.

Keep out of all contentions and law-suits with each other; by which your valuable time, which should be spent in useful occupations, is grievously misapplied, your money is wasted, and your character in the world, is unhappily injured and degraded:—it is a mortifying sight to your friends, to see the coloured people bringing each other before the civil officers and in courts of justice for trifling causes of contention, which by exercising an amiable and forbearing disposition might be easily settled, without going to law, and spending their time and money, in useless disputations.

Be faithful to the obligations of the marriage covenant. Be diligent in your respective callings, so that you may not disappoint the expectations of those who have confided in you, and in the capacity of domestics or hired servants, shew yourselves faithful; remembering that no situation in life is disgraceful in itself, but that upon your own conduct, will depend the estimation in which you will be held by others; and if you perform your duty with fidelity, you will be respected and esteemed. Be just in all your dealings, and strictly punctual in the performance of all your promises; so shall you gain the approbation and the confidence of your white neighbours, and justify the conduct of those who have laboured for your emancipation.

Let an especial attention be had to keep a regular record of your marriages, and of the births of your children, by which their ages may at any time be legally established;—this will be of essential service to you in placing them out as apprentices and prevent impositions being practised upon you. Final-

ly—be sober; be watchful over every part of your conduct, keeping constantly in view, that the freedom of many thousands of your colour, who still remain in slavery, will be hastened and promoted by your leading a life of virtue and sobriety.

On motion, Resolved that the Acting Committee be directed to cause such number of copies of the above address, to be printed and distributed, as they may think proper.

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The Select Committee on the subject of colonization submitted a Report on the facts connected with that object, with the draft of an essay which they proposed for insertion in the circular address to the Societies:—The report of the Committee being read, was accepted, and is as follows;—

## *To the "American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery," &c.*

The Committee to whom was referred the proposed plan of colonizing the free people of colour of the United States, in Africa, for the purpose of collecting facts, for the information of the Convention connected with that object, *Report:*

That deeply impressed with the magnitude of the duty entrusted to them, they have wished that an opportunity had been afforded to examine it extensively, and to present to the Convention a full detail of all the circumstances which might assist their deliberations on this interesting subject. They have been aware that sufficient time for this purpose could not be allowed to them, and they have therefore forborne to proceed further in the investigation, than has been deemed absolutely essential to a correct understanding of the proposed undertaking.

In tracing the history of the plan of colonizing the free people of colour of the United States, in Africa, the Committee have been disposed to adopt the opinion that it originated in the suggestions and observations, of a distinguished citizen of the

state of Virginia, who has with honour to himself, and advantage to his country, devoted himself to agriculture — The existence of such persons in a community, claiming to hold their fellow men in bondage, was long since declared by him to be an evil of the greatest magnitude, extensively injurious to the interests of slave holders, and their removal advocated by the employment of force for this purpose, if other means should not be successful. He recommends, in one of his publications, "that lands, "within the controul of the National Legislature, shall be "procured for them, and if they should not be willing "to avail themselves of the option allowed to them to remove "there," he enquires, with no disapprobation of such proceedings, "whether the national safety and prosperity will "not justify harsher measures for this purpose."

The Legislature of Virginia acting as it is believed, under the influence of similar views, in 1816, adopted certain resolutions inviting the attention of the government of the United States, to a plan of colonization, "on the coast of Africa, or "some other place not within the states or territorial governments of the United States, to serve as an asylum for such "persons of colour, then free, who might desire the same, and "for those who might be afterwards emancipated within that "Commonwealth."

"The American Society for colonizing the free people of colour of the United States," was instituted after the promulgation of these wishes and opinions, and its purposes are presumed to have been directed by the same considerations. In their efforts to ascertain the views and designs of this association, the Committee have directed their attention to the proceedings which took place at its formation, and at its first annual meeting, and they beg leave to communicate some of the sentiments expressed on these occasions by those who have enrolled themselves among its members.

One gentleman declared "that it constituted no part of the "object of the society to touch or agitate a delicate question "connected with another portion of the coloured population "of the United States," and he stated "that it was only on "that condition he attended the meeting to establish the society."

Another gentleman, declared on the same occasion, "that it "appeared to him, it had not been sufficiently insisted on, with "a view to obtain the co-operation of all the citizens of the "United States, not only that the meeting does not in any wise "affect the question of negro slavery, but as far as it goes,

" must materially tend to secure the property of every master,
" in the United States over his slaves. It appeared to him, that
" this aspect of the question had not been sufficiently presented
" to public view. It was a notorious fact, that the existence
" of this mixed and intermediate population of free negroes, was
" viewed by every slave-holder, as one of the greatest sources
" of the insecurity, and also unprofitableness of slave property;
" that they serve to excite, in their fellow beings, a feeling of
" discontent, of repining at their situation, and that they act
" as channels of communication, between different slaves of
" different districts, and are the depositories of stolen goods
" and the promoters of mischief"

At the first annual meeting of the Society in January, 1818, one of the members of the society declared, " that it was pro-
" per again and again to repeat, that it was far from the inten-
" tion of the society to affect, in any manner, the tenure by
" which a certain species of property is held. He was him-
" self a slave-holder, and he considered that kind of property
" as inviolable as any other in the country. He would resist,
" as soon and with as much firmness, encroachments upon it,
" as he would upon any property which he held."

From a referrence to these facts, the Committee deem it their duty to state, that they have not been able to discern, in the constitution and proceedings of the American Colonization Society, or in the avowed sentiments of its members, any thing friendly to the abolition of slavery in the United States.

The Committee are forcibly impressed with the conviction, that the plan of colonizing the free people of colour proposed by the Society, is impracticable, and if it is practicable, that it will be attended with fatal consequences to those who shall embark in its purposes. Its effects upon the condition of the free people of colour, and on the slave population of the United States, they apprehend, may become greatly injurious.

It is impracticable, because the Committee are satisfied, that those whom it proposes to transport to Africa, are not willing to accept of the provisions in their favour which it professes to hold out. So far as the Committee have been able to ascertain the opinion and wishes of those persons, and their means for this purpose have not been few, there exists among them a determined opposition to the design. In the city of Philadelphia and its vicinity, this opposition has been manifested in a remonstrance, adopted at a very numerous meeting of the people of colour in the summer of 1817, and which has been recently re-published by them, and circulated among those with whom,

they have supposed, the same would have an influence. Those of this description of our fellow men, who are natives of our common country, acknowledge an alliance and affection for no other, and they consider themselves as well the children of that country, as we do ourselves. When among those whose ancestors emigrated here from Europe, there shall prevail a disposition to relinquish America and return it to its aboriginal possessors. then we may expect there will prevail among the free descendants of Africa, who are among us, a wish to return to its shores.

Nor is this the only obstacle to the execution of the plan. The magnitude of its expence, the almost unlimited pecuniary means it will require to conduct its operations, would interpose other and insuperable obstacles to its success. The free coloured population of the United States, by the census of 1810, numbered 186,446. Estimating the costs of transporting those persons at the small sum of one hundred dollars each, the amount would be 18,644,600 dollars; and after they should have been conveyed to Africa, but a small portion of the necessary expenditure would have been consumed. To feed and clothe the colonists, to furnish them with articles essential for their comfort, and requisite for the exercise of their industry, would call for thrice that amount; and thus the disbursements would be augmented to 54,933,800 dollars. But if we yield to the calculations of the partial advocates of the plan, and suppose but one sixth of the persons to be colonized, will demand to be provided for; then the sum of 9,322,300 dollars must be furnished; and the Committee have yet to learn, that a hope is encouraged by the Society, that they will be enabled to procure this amount.

In the failure which has attended the efforts of the nations of Europe, to establish colonies in Africa, the Committee have seen a confirmation of the opinion they have expressed, that the plan of the American Colonization Society is impracticable; and their apprehension of the ruin and misery, which would be visited on those who may participate in the attempt, have been increased. The Committee have, in vain, sought for evidence of the flourishing condition of any colony, located on the western shores of Africa, from the Cape of Good Hope to the Kingdom of Morocco. Great Britain, France, Spain, Denmark and Sweden, have each exerted themselves to colonize there, and they have all, in a great measure, failed in their efforts.

The Colony of Sierra Leone, the most extensive and numerous, known to the Committee, is represented to be in a "plan-

guishing condition," and the objects expected to result from it, are, it is said, about to be relinquished as hopeless. In the year 1787, when it was founded, its numbers were reduced by disease from four hundred and sixty, to two hundred and seventy-six. In 1789, the inhabitants were dispersed, and the town burnt to ashes, by an African chief, in revenge for some depredations committed by a slave factor, to whose party two of the colonists had been compelled to serve as guides. Re-established in 1791, it flourished, for a time, under the superintendance of the virtuous Clarkson; but pillaged in 1794 by the French, it was afterwards found necessary by the company, who had charge of its interests, in consequence of difficulties which arose in regulating its concerns, and of its expences, to relinquish it to the crown of Great Britain. Since that event, a proposition has been publicly made, for its entire abandonment.*

A colony established in the island of Bulama, at the mouth of Rio Grande, by the English, under the direction of Lieutenant Philip Beaver in 1792; was attacked by the natives, pestilence swept off many of its members, and in 1793 the settlement was deserted and given up. The few remaining sufferers, who survived the ravages of war and disease, removed to Sierra Leone; and Lieutenant Beaver returned to Great Britain, after having expended, in one year, in this attempt to colonize two hundred and seventy-five persons, the sum of ten thousand pounds sterling.

In 1780, the government of Sweden undertook the erection of a colony near Goree. This was the first specific plan "for alleviating the evils, which the inhuman man-trade had occasioned in Africa," and to that nation is due "the glory of this "first attempt to vindicate insulted humanity, and to burst the "chains, which the sanction of ages had rivetted, to demolish "the prison house, and to raise over its ruins the temple of free-"dom."

Under the protection of a society formed at Norkoping in 1779, acting under a charter which authorised them to locate forty families on the coast of Africa, the adventurers, accompanied by enthusiasts in the cause of virtue and science, arrived at Goree in 1787. "The general war, excited by the rapacious and oppressive monopoly of the Senegal Company," had rendered the interior country entirely inaccessible, and obliged Wardstrom, the leader of the association, and his companions, to return to Europe.

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* Communication from Sir James Lucas Yeo, published in the Philadelphia papers in the summer of 1818.

The last attempt to colonize, was made by the Danes in 1788, under the direction of Dr. Isert. His labours to accomplish the object, were soon after his arrival on the Coast, arrested by death; and it may be, that a small establishment was afterwards completed by lieutenant colonel Roer, who succeeded Dr. Isert, as the principal of the undertaking. It was placed in a district called Aquapim, of inconsiderable extent, and little of its present situation is known, or whether it has survived the scourge of pestilence, or the more destructive havock of hostilities by the savage nations who surrounded it.

To these facts and observations, the Committee beg leave briefly to add; that the disastrous results of the different expeditions to explore the borders and interior of Africa, on the western coast; furnish abundant evidence of the dangers which will attend all who may attempt to occupy its shores; and the conclusion is irresistible, that if these enterprising adventurers, protected by the possession of all the means to guard them from destruction, which they must have enjoyed, were swept off, colonists would experience a harder and an earlier fate.

The Committee do not undertake to assert, that there may not be found, on the western shores of Africa, numerous rich and fertile tracts of country, abounding in all the fruits and productions of the luxuriant soils of tropical climates. But they claim the privilege to state, that so far as they have been able to obtain information, from which an opinion can be formed, these tracts are small in extent, widely separated, and many of them are placed nearly under the burning sun of the line; and they are constantly visited by diseases, which are fatal to all who are exposed to their influence. The mouths and banks of the rivers, where the most productive soil is always found, are, more particularly, exposed to pestilence and mortality. The country is in general occupied by a bold and martial race, entirely addicted to war; many of them of a large size, strong and well proportioned; their courage intrepid, and they are all tenacious and jealous of liberty. The character of the nations near the coast, as distinguished from those of the interior, is peculiarly ferocious and bloody.

To obtain a cession of lands from such people, in favour of pacific and unarmed strangers, could not be easily accomplished. To take possession of such a country by force, would require an army.

But should a territory of sufficient extent be found and its surrender obtained, by peaceful means; of what avail would be the cession? From whence would a guarantee of its perma-

nency be procured, and who could rely on any assurance of the validity of such a transfer? Let the security of any title thus derived, be appreciated by the observations which will be found in a work of great authority, "Leyden's Discoveries in Africa." "More formidable obstacles presented themselves, in prevail-"ing on the native chiefs to ratify the surrender of territory, "which had been formerly occupied." "The only property "with which a savage is acquainted, consists of the fruits of "the earth, his ornaments, arms, and instruments of hunting "and fishing. He changes his habitation according to conve-"nience, and never thinks of buying or selling the earth upon "which he roams at large. His own possession of territory is "temporary, he cannot therefore believe that any cession is "perpetual. He admits a colony because he imagines it con-"sists of his friends, or because the colonists have purchased "his friendship, but as soon as he changes his opinion, and "withdraws his friendship, he thinks himself completely justi-"fied in resuming that right, which he had abandoned without "reflection."

Persuaded of the impracticability of prosperous colonization in Africa, and of the misery and suffering, in which an attempt to carry it into operation, would involve those who might engage in the undertaking, the Committee are desirous to present other considerations to the notice of the Convention.

The formation of a plan of colonization, in the bosom of the slave-holding states, for other purposes than those connected with with the abolition of slavery, avowed as this plan has been, to have no such design; seems to portend, in the opinion of the Committee, to the cause for which our Societies have been associated, every thing which its friends and advocates ought to dread. In a just view of the subject, it may be contemplated, as fruitful of means to eternize the bondage of those of the African race who may be left behind the colonists; and as thus defeating the slow but certain progress of those principles, which, if uninterrupted, will produce their universal enrancipation.

In the influence of this plan, on the condition of the free people of colour in the slave-holding states, it may be fatal to their prosperity. Objects of jealousy, fear and hatred to those, who hold their brothers in bondage, they will exercise on all occasions the power, with which they are invested, to regulate their situation, and legislate over them. If, when the opportunity to abandon their homes their friends and their kindred, by embarking for the colony in Africa, shall be offered to them, they shall desire to remain, in the country of their birth and of their

affections; other methods than compulsion will be employed, and they will thus be driven to adopt, as a refuge from suffering and oppression, transportation to a grave in Africa. Already have measures been resorted to in one of the states to the south, which, it is conjectured, may have been prompted by an expectation of success in the plan of establishing a colony in Africa. A heavy poll tax, levied exclusively on the free people of colour, has instructed them, as well in the knowledge of the power of those who legislate over them, as in their disposition to abuse that power. The option of voluntary emigration, and the protest which has always been avowed against the employment of compulsory means to increase the number of colonists, will avail nothing, if measures of this kind are adopted by those states, where a disposition to get rid of the free people of colour prevails.

The Committee are of opinion, that the most expedient mode of declaring the sense of the Convention on this important subject, will be by expressing it, in the proposed address to the Abolition Societies of the United States; and for this purpose, they have prepared certain paragraphs, herewith reported, which, if approved by the Convention, may form a part of that address.

All which is respectfully submitted, on behalf of the Committee.

RICHARD PETERS, Jr. Chairman.

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On motion, the essay, accompanying the above report, was considered in *committee of the whole:* Mr. Jonas Preston in the chair. The Committee, after a full examination of the subject, rose and reported sundry amendments, which were concurred with by the Convention. Whereupon, the essay as amended was unanimously adopted, and referred to the committee appointed to prepare a circular address to the Societies, to be incorporated with that address.

Leave of absence was granted to Joseph Bringhurst and Samuel Hilles, for the remainder of the session.

Adjourned to 11 o'clock to-morrow morning.

*December 15th*, 1818.

Eleven o'clock A. M. Convention met and proceeded to business.

The essays of memorials, on the subject of the sale of people of colour, illegally imported into the United States, and upon the situation of the slave population in the District of Columbia, were on motion, referred to the joint attention of the committees who reported them; with instructions to unite them in one memorial, and to incorporate therewith, a request to Congress for the revision of the act concerning fugitives from justice.

The following preamble and resolution, were moved, and adopted, viz.

The attention of the Convention having been called to the Island of St. Domingo or Hayti, and it being believed, that the cause of humanity would be promoted, if measures could be devised, whereby an end might be put to the unfortunate divisions which at present exist, between the two independent governments in that Island, and a pacification effected:

Resolved, That the President of the Convention, with the advice and assistance of the Acting Committee, be requested to open a correspondence with the African Institution of Great Britain, and with such influential and philanthropic individuals, in Europe and elsewhere, as he may think proper, upon these subjects; with a view to effect the objects expressed in the preamble to this resolution, and to promote such arrangements, as will render that island a safe asylum for such free people of colour in the United States and elsewhere, as may choose to emigrate to it.

A statement of the accounts of the Convention, was received from the Treasurer, shewing a cash ba-

lance in his hands of ninety-five dollars twenty-seven cents.

A communication was received from the Pennsylvania Society for promoting the abolition of slavery, &c. stating that the Society had appropriated sixty dollars, towards defraying the expences of the present special meeting of the Convention.

On motion, Resolved that this Convention entertains a grateful sense of the generous contribution made by WILLIAM DILLWYN of London, in aid of the cause of emancipation, and that the thanks of the Convention be transmitted to him by the President.

The Committee appointed to prepare the circular address to the Societies, reported an essay, which being considered by paragraphs, was, with some amendments, unanimously adopted.

Adjourned to half past three o'clock.

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Half past three o'clock P. M.

Convention met pursuant to adjournment.

The joint committees on the subject of preparing a memorial to Congress, reported an essay thereof, which being read, was with some amendments, adopted as follows;—

*To the Honourable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

The Memorial of the American Convention for promoting the abolition of slavery, and improving the condition of the African race,

*Respectfully Sheweth;*

That a coincidence of circumstances materially affecting the interests of humanity, in relation to slavery

and the slave-trade, having induced a special meeting of the delegates of the several Societies in different parts of the United States, which compose this Convention, they are induced to solicit the attention of Congress to the following among other considerations which have claimed their serious deliberation.

By the law of March 1807, the introduction of slaves into the United States, was forbidden under certain penalties and forfeitures, which it was hoped would not be encountered by avarice or evaded by collusion, a provision in that law however, renewed and confirmed by the law of April 1818, allows that if slaves are imported, they shall be disposed of, agreeably to such regulations as may be made by the legislatures of the several states, where the importation takes place, a provision which goes far to defeat the declared object of the law.

The policy which prevails in the slave-holding states, authorises their sale, and fixes upon them the seal of perpetual bondage. The law of Congress therefore in its practical operation, does in fact consign persons to that very slavery, which its general spirit and its severe penalties would, on the first impression, seem calculated to prevent. That the temptations to import are stronger than the terrors which the laws hold out, is not now a matter of suspicion, but of public notoriety. On the 20th of July last, 139 negroes were sold by the sheriff of New-Orleans, as having been brought there in violation of the laws of the United States; and on the 26th of August following, 63 were sold at Milledgeville, in Georgia, on account of a similar introduction; several other instances of a like character, it is confidently believed, have occurred in Louisiana, and that the trade is still covertly prosecuted, in different forms, with activity and profit.

Of the disposition which has been made of the proceeds of the forfeitures already incurred, your memorialists have no certain intelligence; but for the honour of their country, in common with a large portion of the community, whose feelings have been strongly excited by these circumstances, they anxiously hope, that no part of this price of human blood and sinews, has stained the national treasury.

That the law as it now stands, does not and will not prevent importations is obvious; but they believe that a provision which should increase the penalties, and declare every person, illegally imported as a slave, to be free, would strike at the root of the evil, by destroying the motives which now exist for the violation of the law.

Your memorialists beg leave also to observe, that under the act of Congress, entitled "An Act respecting fugitives from justice and persons escaping from the service of their masters," various outrages upon the liberties of persons legally entitled to their freedom, have been committed. They forbear to enter circumstantially into a consideration of these outrages, or of the proper means of relief, as the subject was fully exhibited to the view of Congress at its last session, but they respectfully solicit your renewed attention to this important concern, as the evil still continues, and the remedy, which is solely in your power, remains to be applied.

Your memorialists are likewise desirous of calling your attention to the territory over which Congress holds exclusive legislation. The patriot, the philosopher and the statesman look to this spot, where the legislative authority of the republic has an uncontrouled operation, for that perfect system of laws, which shall at once develop the wisdom of the government, and display the justice and benevolence of its policy!

Is it not an incongruous exhibition to ourselves, as well as to foreigners who may visit the seat of the government of the nation; whose distinguished characteristic is its devotion to freedom; whose constitution proclaims that all men are born equally free, to behold, on the one hand, the representatives of the people asserting with impassioned eloquence, the unalienable rights of man; and on the other, to see our fellow men, children of the same Almighty Father, heirs like ourselves of immortality, doomed for a difference of complexion, themselves and their posterity to hopeless bondage?

Deeply impressed with these considerations, your memorialists do earnestly but respectfully request your honourable body, to take into your serious consideration, the situation of slavery in the District of Columbia, and to devise a plan for its gradual but certain termination, within the limits of your exclusive legislation; by which all children, born of slaves after a determinate period, shall be free.

*Signed on behalf and by order of the Convention, assembled at Philadelphia, December 15th*, 1818.

On motion, Resolved that the President sign, and cause to be presented to both houses of Congress, the memorials to that body, adopted by this Convention, and that in their transmission, precedence be given to the above memorial.

On motion, Resolved that the Acting Committee be directed to employ some suitable person, to collect, at the expence of the convention, the laws of the several states respecting slaves and servants of colour; to digest the same, and if they deem it expedient, to cause such digest to be printed for the use of the Societies.

On motion of a delegate from New York, it was unanimously resolved, that the thanks of this Convention be returned to Richard Peters, jr. Esq. for the zeal, ability, and attention, with which he has presided over the convention, during its present session.

On motion, Resolved that the minutes of the proceedings of this Convention, with the circular address, &c. be published by the Acting Committee, and that the usual number of copies be transmitted to the several societies.

Adjourned, sine die.

Attest,

ISAAC M. ELY, Secretary.

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## CIRCULAR ADDRESS

### *To the Abolition and Manumission Societies in the United States of America.*

While in taking a retrospect of the blessings with which the exertions of the friends to the emancipation of the African race have been crowned, the American Convention for the abolition of slavery, assembled at Philadelphia, see much cause to send forth the warm incense of gratitude to the GIVER of every good and perfect gift; they find in the vast and as yet unexplored field before them, sufficient to call forth the exertions of every friend to humanity.

The present period, more than any which has preceded it in the annals of time, is distinguished for a zeal to enlighten the human mind. When it is considered that MIND distinguishes man from inferior orders of beings, and that it is in reference

to the soul of man, that he is said to be formed after the image of his Creator; it is a subject of admiration, that the obvious truth has not been before discovered and practised upon by christendom, that the only means for promoting the happiness of human beings, is moral and intellectual cultivation. But, though the acknowledgement of this truth is late, we hail the date of its general influence, as a most auspicious aera in the history of man. In the operations of that philanthropy, which in some countries of christendom beside our own, has seemed of late to warm the human bosom, from the throne to the cottage, we think we trace the footsteps of HIM who willeth not the death of a sinner!

But while we witness with delight the doings of philanthropy, whatever may be their object, may we not be permitted to suggest what object ought, in our opinion, to claim the primary and best exertions of American philanthropy.

It is one of those trite but vain injunctions frequently repeated in common life, "be just before you are generous." The man who would rob the family which properly looked to him for subsistence, by the contribution of his means to the support of any other object, however laudable in itself, we should regard, if not worse than an infidel, at least unjust. The principle of morality which enjoins this duty upon an individual, is equally obligatory upon a nation, and enforces upon that nation the necessity of making the melioration of condition, and improvement of its own citizens, objects of its primary concern.

If the correctness of the above reasoning be admitted, it will not, it is thought, be denied, that the United States of America, and consequently all the citizens of those states, are bound by strong moral

obligation to relieve the wants and promote the welfare of all the poor and destitute in this country, by every means in their power. Of all the poor, of all the destitute human beings in our country, the descendants of Africa stand pre-eminent. Gladly would this convention see these objects of their care, enrolled among the participators of that philanthropy which characterises the present age. Gladly would we witness them the recipients of that favour, which the governments of our country, and the munificence of our fellow citizens at large, are wont to bestow upon the needy and wretched in this land, which seems to be the object of kind Heaven's peculiar blessings. But let it be remembered that in behalf of the African race in our country, we appeal to this great free community, not simply as petitioners for charity; no, we demand redress for injuries. The long catalogue of Africa's wrongs is known, even to our children, and the large share which our own country has contributed to the wretchedness of her sons, must be regarded as the blackest stain upon our national annals. Impressed with a sense of its inhumanity, the legislature of our country has abolished the slave trade, and some of our states have made laws in favour of emancipation. But shall the friends of abolition rest satisfied with these attainments? No: let it not be forgotten that near one million and an half of slaves yet people our land; and in many states of our union no steps whatever have been taken towards the gradual emancipation of their slave population. The convention would wish to awaken the patriotism and benevolence of every American citizen to this subject. Was the declaration of our Independence meant only to furnish an idle theme for declamation, when it asserts that all men are born with an equal right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness? Does reason

or revelation acknowledge that superior privileges should attach to men of a particular colour? And yet the slave, in some portions of our country, is not only tasked with the severest duties, but the light of knowledge is debarred his mind, by municipal provisions.

The only arguments to be offered in justification or palliation of these crying enormities, are built upon the assumption that the African race is of an order of beings inferior to our own, or that admitting him to be entitled to his freedom, and the other privileges of a native citizen of our country, it is not *expedient* at once, to emancipate him. The fallacy of the first argument may be amply shown by a referrence to the progress in learning, and the ardent desire of improvement, manifested in the African free schools under the patronage of some of your societies. And as to the latter argument, the convention would observe, that those state regulations by which a termination has been assigned, at a future day, to the slavery or servitude of the African descendants within the controul of such states, have met their decided approbation. If the slave-holders of our country, will only affix a period for the final termination of slavery, within such time as may be consistent with their own safety, and the preparation of the slave by previous education, for the enjoyment of liberty, this Convention, in behalf of abolition, will ask no more of them.

But while the convention are firmly persuaded that the truths and arguments above stated are incontrovertible, they do not flatter themselves that their practical operation upon mankind, will be witnessed to any considerable extent, until after the long continued, and active exertions of the friends of emancipation! and it is thought by the convention that these exertions can not be applied in any man-

ner more favourable to the accomplishment of the object desired, than by the education of slaves and free persons of colour.

The mendicity and wretchedness of free persons of colour, are sometimes made the basis of an argument opposed to emancipation. If the propounder of this argument would but advert to the fact, that the degradation of the African is attributable to no fault of his own; so far from finding in this degradation, a justification for the continuance of slavery, he would, it is thought, find sufficient motives to double his exertions for the improvement of the wretched victim of avarice and oppression. But when it is seen that those allowances for the African race, which would be induced by the consideration adverted to, are not made; the friends of abolition are required to educate to the utmost of their ability, all those persons of colour within the sphere of their influence. This course is recommended, not only by the advantages which such education would confer on the individual subjects of it, but that this despised race may be possessed of sufficient intelligence to make an appeal in behalf of themselves, and those who are free, in behalf of their enslaved brethren, to the moral sense of individuals and the nation. Nor should the literary and moral education of African children, limit your endeavours for their improvement; it is highly proper, that exertions should be used to establish them in trades and other employments, that thus they may become respectable and useful members of society. The convention have been informed that African children and adults have been taught, with no inconsiderable success, in the city of New York and its vicinity, in SUNDAY SCHOOLS; they would therefore recommend the establishment of these schools for their instruction, during such hours of the day, as will not interfere with due attendance upon public worship.

There is one other subject upon which the convention deem it their duty to address you.

It being important that those who are engaged in the same cause, should act in concert, the convention think it prudent to express an opinion upon a project which has excited much attention, and which may have an influence on the future destinies of the African race. We mean the scheme for removing the free people of colour, from the United States to some spot on the coast of Africa. We have investigated this scheme with great care, and bestowed upon it much and serious deliberation: the result has been a very decided opinion that it ought not to receive the support of the friends of universal emancipation. The limits of this address will not allow us to do more than to mention some of the principal reasons for this opinion.

In the first place, and this alone is sufficient, the people of colour are averse to the plan, and cannot be transported to Africa unless by force. A remonstrance from those who are in the city of Philadelphia, where their number is considerable, which will be printed with this address, shews the view in which they regard the scheme in question, and we have reason to believe that similar feelings prevail very universally. We think also, that the situation of these people would not be improved by their transportation. They labour it is true under a disadvantage here, but they are natives of this country, in a great part of which, they are protected by equal laws, enjoy the consolation of religion, and the advantages of instruction. By industry they can procure a competence; and all the benefits bestowed upon our nation by science and the arts, are to a certain extent necessarily communicated to them. We cannot perceive that their happiness would be

increased by removing them to the unwholesome shores of Africa, where in addition to all the hardships usually encountered by new colonists, they would be exposed to the hostility of the barbarous inhabitants, and liable to fall victims to any European power, with which the United States shall be at war. Not yet sufficiently enlightened to govern themselves, they must there, as well as here, be subjected to white rulers; and with all these disadvantages their improvement would probably be retarded instead of being accelerated. The colony of Sierra Leone, though founded and cherished by the wisest and most active philanthropists, and aided by the British government, yet languishes, and has realized few of the expectations which were entertained by its projectors. We doubt however, whether the scheme be practicable. There is reason to believe, though upon this point we would not speak positively, that on the whole Atlantic coast of Africa, south of the great Desart, no place can be found in a healthy climate, unembarrassed by European claims, in which there is a tract of land, fit for cultivation and lying in one body, sufficiently extensive to support a colony numerous enough to defend its own independence. But supposing a scite to be found in every respect proper for the purpose, and supposing the free people of colour willing to be removed, how are they to be transported? To send only a few, it is obvious would have no influence on the welfare of this country, or of those who remain here. The total number at the last census of free persons of colour, was upwards of 186,000, and it has since considerably increased. Let any one calculate the millions it would cost, to transport this number of people, to feed and maintain them till they shall have cleared and cultivated the ground, and the annual expence of a large military establishment kept up in Africa to defend them, and then answer whether the Congress will

be willing to impose, or the people of the United States to pay, the taxes which would be necessary for so profuse an expenditure: even if these difficulties were removed, we would ask what form of government it is intended to frame for the colony? Is it intended to form it into a territory, and in due time to admit it into the Union, as a state? We presume not. Is it intended that it shall always be governed by the United States, and that Congress shall have power to bind it in all cases whatsoever? Since the colonists will be free citizens of the United States, will they not carry with them the rights which they now enjoy, and be entitled in regard to the parent country, to all the privileges which these states claimed while British colonies? Or is the colony to be erected into an independent nation? In that case we shall cease to have any right to controul them, and though no one can foresee, yet all must apprehend the consequences to result from a nation, so composed as that will be. Such and so many are the difficulties and embarrassments with which this project is attended, that we cannot help regarding its accomplishment, as being at the least extremely improbable. Besides, it has been candidly avowed, by some of the advocates of this scheme, that one of the objects to be answered by it, is to render property in slaves more secure. Now our object being gradually to abolish this kind of property, we do not perceive the expediency of our supporting a measure, the tendency of which, is admitted by some of its most distinguished friends, to be hostile to the purpose which we are labouring to effect. It may be asked, why if we suppose this scheme impracticable, we think it necessary to notice it? We do so, because we fear that the existence of the scheme may be injurious. Should it receive the approbation of Congress or of the legislatures of the slave states, so as to induce an expectation in those parts of the Union that it will be executed, it

is highly probable that the question of emancipation will become connected with it; in that case every attempt to procure a gradual abolition of slavery will be resisted, on the ground that measures for that purpose cannot conveniently be taken, until a colony shall be established, to which the liberated slaves may be transported; and thus the very impracticability of the plan will render it mischievous. We shall only add, that upon a very dispassionate review of the subject, we are confirmed in the opinion expressed in our resolution, passed in August 1817, in the following words. "Resolved as the sense of "this Convention, and explanatory of its views of "this interesting subject, that the gradual and total "emancipation of all persons of colour, and their "literary and moral education, should precede their "colonization."

We have also taken into consideration the expediency of promoting the emigration of free people of colour to the island of Hayti, which it is understood would be encouraged by the governments there. But on this subject much remains to be known, before a decided opinion can be prudently formed.

Before concluding this address, the convention would notice with much satisfaction, the act of the state of New Jersey to prohibit the exportation of slaves or servants of colour out of that state. The convention deem the benevolent exertions of their friends in that state, as worthy of all praise, and the decided expression of the public sentiment, signified in the passage of that law, by the unanimous consent of the Legislature, is calculated to cheer the hopes of the philanthropist.

*Signed on behalf and by order of the Convention, December* 15, 1818.

RICHARD PETERS, Jr. President.

Attest—Isaac M. Ely, Secretary.

## *Address of the free people of colour in Philadelphia,*

REFERRED TO IN THE PRECEDING CIRCULAR.

At a numerous meeting of the free people of colour of the city and county of Philadelphia, held in pursuance of public notice, at the school house in Green's court, on the evening of August 10th 1817, for the purpose of taking into consideration the plan of colonizing the free people of colour of the United States, on the coast of Africa, James Forten, was appointed chairman, and Russell Parrott, secretary. *Resolved unanimously*, that the following address, signed on behalf of the meeting, by the chairman and secretary, be published and circulated.

*To the humane and benevolent Inhabitants of the city and county of Philadelphia.*

THE free people of colour, assembled together, under circumstances of deep interest to their happiness and welfare, humbly and respectfully, lay before you this expression of their feelings and apprehensions.

Relieved from the miseries of slavery, many of us by your aid, possessing the benefits which industry and integrity in this prosperous country assure to all its inhabitants, enjoying the rich blessings of religion, by opportunities of worshiping the only true God, under the light of Christianity, each of us according to his understanding; and having afforded to us and to our children the means of education and improvement; we have no wish to separate from our present homes, for any purpose whatever. Contented with our present situation and condition we are not desirous of increasing their prosperity, but by honest efforts and by the use of those opportunities for their improvement, which the constitution and laws allow to all. It is therefore with painful solicitude, and sorrowing regret, we have seen a plan for colonizing the free people of colour of the United States on the coast of Africa, brought forward under the auspices and sanction of gentlemen whose names give value to all they recommend, and who certainly are among the wisest, the best, and the most benevolent of men, in this great nation.

If the plan of colonizing, is intended for our benefit; and those who now promote it, will never seek our injury; we

humbly and respectfully urge, that it is not asked for by us; nor will it be required by any circumstances, in our present or future condition; as long as we shall be permitted to share the protection of the excellent laws, and just government which we now enjoy, in common with every individual of the community.

We therefore, a portion of those, who are objects of this plan, and among those whose happiness, with that of others of our colour, it is intended to promote; with humble and grateful acknowledgments to those who have devised it, renounce, and disclaim every connection with it; and respectfully but firmly declare our determination, not to participate in any part of it.

If this plan of colonization now proposed, is intended to provide a refuge and a dwelling for a portion of our brethren, who are now held in slavery in the south, we have other and stronger objections to it, and we entreat your consideration of them.

The ultimate and final abolition of slavery in the United States, is, under the guidance and protection of a just God, progressing. Every year witnesses the release of numbers of the victims of oppression, and affords new and safe assurances that the freedom of all will in the end be accomplished. As they are thus, by degrees relieved from bondage, our brethren have opportunities for instruction and improvement; and thus they become in some measure fitted for their liberty.—Every year, many of us have restored to us by the gradual, but certain march of the cause of abolition—Parents, from whom we have been long separated—Wives and children, whom we had left in servitude—and Brothers, in blood as well as in early sufferings, from whom we had been long parted.

But if the emancipation of our kindred, shall, when the plan of colonization shall go into effect, be attended with transportation to a distant land, and shall be granted on no other condition; the consolation for our past sufferings and of those of our colour, who are in slavery; which have hitherto been, and under the present situation of things, would continue to be afforded to us and to them, will cease for ever. The cords, which now connect them with us, will be stretched by the distance to which their ends will be carried, until they break; and all the sources of happiness, which affection and connexion, and blood bestow, will be ours or theirs no more.

Nor do we view the colonization of those who may become emancipated by its operation among our southern brethren, as capable of producing their happiness. Unprepared by edu-

cation, and a knowledge of the truths of our blessed religion, for their new situation, those who will thus become colonists will themselves be surrounded by every suffering which can afflict the members of the human family.

Without arts, without habits of industry, and unaccustomed to provide by their own exertions and foresight for their wants, the colony will soon become the abode of every vice and the home of every misery. Soon will the light of Christianity, which now dawns among that section of our species, be shut out by the clouds of ignorance, and their day of life be closed, without the illuminations of the Gospel.

To those of our brethren, who shall be left behind, there will be assured perpetual slavery and augmented sufferings.—Diminished in numbers the slave population of the southern states, which by its magnitude alarms its proprietors, will be easily secured. Those among their bondmen, who feel that they should be free, by rights which all mankind have from God and and from nature, and who thus may become dangerous to the quiet of their masters, will be sent to the colony; and the tame and submissive will be retained, and subjected to increased rigour. Year after year, will witness these means to assure safety and submission among their slaves; and the southern masters will colonize only those whom it may be dangerous to keep among them. The bondage of a large portion of our brethren will thus be rendered perpetual.

Should the anticipations of misery and want among the colonists, which with great deference we have submitted to your better judgment, be realized; to emancipate and transport to the colony, will be held forth by slave-holders, as the worst and heaviest of punishments; and they will be threatened and successfully used, to enforce increased submission to their wishes, and subjection to their commands.

Nor ought the sufferings and sorrows, which must be produced by an exercise of the right to transport and colonize, such only of their slaves as may be selected by the slave-holders escape the attention and consideration of those whom with all humility we now address. Parents will be torn from their children—husbands from their wives—brothers from brothers—and all the heart-rending agonies which were endured by our forefathers when they were dragged into bondage from Africa, will be again renewed, and with increased anguish. The shores of America, will like the sands of Africa, be watered by the tears of those who will be left behind. Those who shall be carried away will roam childless, widowed, and alone, over the burning plains of Guinea.

Disclaiming, as we emphatically do, a wish or desire to interpose our opinions and feelings between all plans of colonization, and the judgment of those whose wisdom as far exceeds ours, as their situations are exalted above ours; *We humbly*, respectfully, and fervently intreat and beseech your disapprobation of the plan of colonization now offered by "the American society for colonizing the free people of colour of the United States."—Here, in the city of Philadelphia, where the voice of the suffering sons of Africa was first heard; where was first commenced the work of abolition, on which Heaven hath smiled, for it could have had success only from the Great Maker; let not a purpose be assisted which will stay the cause of the entire abolition of slavery in the United States, and which may defeat it altogether; which proffers to those who do not ask for them what it calls benefits, but which they consider injuries; and which must insure to the multitudes whose prayers can only reach you through us, *misery, and sufferings, and perpetual slavery.*

James Forten, Chairman.

Russell Parrott, Secretary.